

General Information

Welcome to Midewin!

Today, about 13,000 acres of Midewin are open to the public, including over 34 miles of trails. About 22 miles of trails are for shared use by hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. Over 12 miles of trails are for hiking only. Bicycles, horses and leashed dogs are restricted to designated trails at all times.



Crayfish Corner, 2016

The Midewin Welcome Center is a great place to start your prairie experience. Here you will see exhibits designed to lay the groundwork for your exploration, whether on your own or participating in one of our escorted programs. Staff at the Welcome Center will be glad to answer questions and assist you with planning your visit. Be sure to check out a variety of gifts and outstanding literature in our bookstore, which is operated by the Midewin Interpretive Association, a private, not-for-profit partner of the U.S. Forest Service.

To register for a program or event, please call 815-423-6370 or email Midewin_RSVP@fs.fed.us

Tour Information

Program Duration

Unless otherwise noted, each program will last approximately 2 hours.

Reservations

Advanced registration is required. To register, please either email us at Midewin_RSVP@fs.fed.us or call 815-423-6370.

Cancellations

We will make every effort to offer all activities as scheduled. All tours, but primarily bike tours may be cancelled or rescheduled due to inclement weather or poor site condition. We will contact you as soon as possible in the event of a cancellation. If you need to cancel your reservation, call us at 815-423-6370. You may leave a message outside of normal business hours.

Where to Meet

Unless otherwise noted, all programs begin and end at the Midewin Welcome Center located at 30239 S. State Route 53, Wilmington, Illinois - the building with the 3 flagpoles in front.

When to Arrive

All programs begin promptly at the published time. Please plan to arrive 15 minutes early to allow time for check-in.

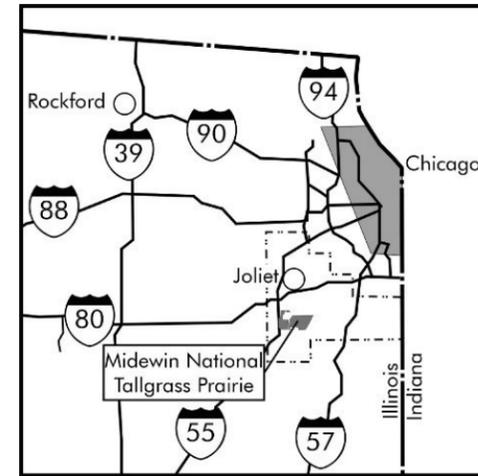
What to Bring

Auto Caravan Tours

Participants in these activities will drive their own vehicles as part of a staff-led caravan. A number of stops are made along the way with short walks to points of interest. Running commentary can be heard over hand-held radios as the tour moves from point to point. Participants need not leave their vehicles if they do not wish to do so.

Bike Tours

Participants in these activities must provide their own bike.



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30239 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481
(815) 423-6370

Welcome Center hours: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Saturday (April—October)
*Closed Saturdays November—March

Trails are open year round
from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin>

Follow Midewin on Facebook and Twitter:
[Facebook.com/Midewin](https://www.facebook.com/Midewin)
[Twitter.com/MidewinNatTP](https://twitter.com/MidewinNatTP)

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

2017 Programs and Events



Photo Credit: Rich Hickson



Tour Schedule

Every Saturday and Sunday, April 1 through October 29:
Midewin Ranger Hike

April:

- 1: Geology of Midewin
- 15: Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant
Spring Wildflower Hike
- 22: Geology of Midewin

May:

- 6: Prairie Kicks on Route 66
- 13: Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant
- 20: Midewin by Auto
- 27: Memorial Day Tour – “Thank You For Your Service”

June:

- 3: Birds of Midewin – West Side
Midewin by Auto
- 7: Midewin For Kids – Fun With Fossils
- 8: Midewin For Kids – Prairie Detectives
- 10: Birds of Midewin – East Side
Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant
- 17: Birds of Midewin – East Side
Midewin by Auto
- 20: Midewin For Kids – Crayfish Corner
- 21: Midewin For Kids – Buzzing About the Prairie
- 24: Birds of Midewin – West Side
- 28: Midewin For Kids – Batty Evening

July:

- 8: Midewin by Auto
Twilight Bike Tour
- 18: Midewin For Kids – Pond Life
- 19: Midewin For Kids – Batty Evening
- 22: Midewin by Auto
- 25: Midewin For Kids – The Life of a Butterfly
- 26: Evening Hike on the Prairie
- 29: Prehistory on the Prairie

August:

- 2: Midewin For Kids – Family RiverWatch
- 3: Evening Hike on the Prairie
- 5: Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant
- 9: Midewin For Kids – Mammal Madness
- 12: Midewin by Auto
- 19: Midewin For Kids – Can You Dig It?
- 26: Midewin by Auto

September:

- 9: Geology of Midewin
- 16: Midewin by Auto

October:

- 7: German Heritage Tour
- 14: Fall Color Hike
- 21: Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant
- 25: Owls & Other Predacious Birds of the Prairie
- 28: Midewin For Kids – Spiders and Snakes

Tour Descriptions

Midewin Ranger Hike

Every Saturday and Sunday, April 1 through October 29,
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Join a Midewin Ranger for a hike to the bison pasture. As usual, you may or may not spot the bison, but you will learn about Midewin’s unique past, present and future in a fun, interactive way, and learn about the dynamics of these fascinating creatures. **No reservations required. Meet at the Iron Bridge Trailhead.**

Geology of Midewin

April 1, April 22, September 9, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

15,000 years ago, a one-mile thick glacial ice sheet moved over Illinois leaving its mark on Midewin. Environments in prehistoric times included tropical swamplands and subtropical oceans. View the rocks, hills and plains of Midewin that still bear evidence of these vastly different environments. Tour lasts 2-1/2 hours and takes place on unimproved roads; gravel and potholes can be expected.

Ghosts of the Ammunition Plant

April 15, May 13, June 10, August 5, October 21, 10:00 a.m.

In 1940, the U.S. Government acquired over 36,000 acres of land to build an ammunition plant. Why here? And how was it built and operated? Learn about the deadly explosion during World War II. Tour the inside of one of the few remaining warehouses and an ammunition storage bunker. Tour lasts about 3 hours with travel over unimproved roads, including gravel and potholes.

Spring Wildflower Hike

April 15, 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Come discover the ephemeral flowers of spring that grow along the Prairie Creek Woods trail. These flowers put on a very short show before trees leaf out. Don’t miss their performance. Great for families.

Red Carpet Corridor Event – “Prairie Kicks on Route 66”

May 6, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Midewin volunteers will lead “*Route 66: Off The Beaten Path*” nature walks and history walks. Learn what life was like along Route 66 during its heyday. See the Golden Alexanders, Spring Beauties, Shooting Stars and other native Illinois prairie blooms. We will discuss the importance of today’s non-native plant removal initiatives to protect and improve habitat for native flowers and pollinators. Shuttles will run from Wilmington and Elwood to the Iron Bridge Trailhead starting at 9:00 a.m., with the last shuttles leaving Midewin at 4:30 p.m. Parking directly at the trailhead will not be available during the event.

Midewin by Auto

May 20, June 3, June 17, July 8, July 22, August 12, August 26, September 16, 10:00 a.m.

Explore Midewin by car caravan to view restored wetlands and prairie and observe wildlife. Find out why ecological restoration is so important while experiencing Midewin’s best examples of restored prairie. Learn about the future of Midewin and what that means for wildlife and recreation. Visit one of the remaining ammunition bunkers for a glimpse into the past. Travel is on unimproved roads; expect potholes and gravel.

Memorial Day Tour – “Thank You For Your Service”

May 27, 10:00 a.m.

Join us to honor our veterans and delve into the origins of Memorial Day. Learn about the lives of local veterans and the conflicts in which they served as well as the role of the Joliet Arsenal in these conflicts as we visit local cemeteries on Midewin and sites of the old Joliet Arsenal.

Birds of Midewin – West Side (Driving tour)

June 3, June 24, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Birders on this west side car caravan tour may get to see loggerhead shrikes, henslow’s sparrows, bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows, meadowlarks, blue grosbeaks, orioles, warblers, and vireos. Tour lasts two hours through much of the west side property. Photography welcome.

Birds of Midewin – East Side (Walking tour)

June 10, June 17, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

This east side hiking tour will begin at the Welcome Center. Participants will follow tour guides to the Iron Bridge Trailhead to start the hike. You may see blue grosbeaks, loggerhead shrikes, bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows, black-billed cuckoos, mockingbirds, and brown thrashers. A 2-hour walk on hiking trails with stops to look at birds. Photography welcome.

Midewin For Kids – Fun With Fossils

Wednesday, June 7, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Learn about fossils in a fun and interactive way. Discover how fossils were formed and where you might find some! Have the opportunity to see and study real fossils.

Midewin For Kids – Prairie Detectives

Thursday, June 8, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Walk on a real prairie. Use your detective skills to find out what animals live there. Learn about the plants and animals that make their home on a prairie. Wear pants, closed-toed shoes and socks.

Midewin For Kids – Crayfish Corner

Tuesday, June 20, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

What are they? Learn all about these little crustaceans. Spend time learning where they live and even how to handle them.

Midewin For Kids – Buzzing About the Prairie

Wednesday, June 21, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

It’s National Pollinator Week, so please join us to discover why birds, bees, butterflies, and other insects are so important to all gardens, not just the prairie! Capture some pollinators as we use sweep nets, look at them through magnified containers and release them. You can transfer your new-found knowledge and skills to your own garden!

Midewin For Kids – Batty Evening

Wednesday, June 28, Wednesday, July 19,

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Learn about the flying mammal that eats mosquitoes! Become an expert and learn how to tell between myth and fact. Decorate a bat house to take home. (One per family.) Take a short hike looking for these tiny, wonderful creatures of the night. Wear long sleeved shirts and pants and bring bug repellent.

Twilight Bike Tour

July 8, 6:00 p.m.

Tour open and closed areas of Midewin by bicycle. expect to see an abundance of wildlife which may include deer, turkey, grassland birds, and maybe a coyote or two. Since at least part of the route will be on gravel surfaces, “fat” tires are recommended.

Midewin For Kids – Pond Life

Tuesday July 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Uncover an amazing world of creatures that live in ponds. Use nets to scoop up critters. Find out about life under water. Learn about insects, amphibians, and mammals. Dress for getting a bit dirty.

Midewin For Kids – The Life of a Butterfly

Tuesday July 25, 12:30 p.m.to 2:30 p.m.

Come discover the life cycle of butterflies. Learn about habitats, butterfly nectar plants and host plants. Be ready to learn, explore and net butterflies.

Evening Hike on the Prairie

Wednesday July 26, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Thursday August 3, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Find out what is blooming this time of year. Hear the wind rustle through prairie grass as the sun begins to set. Enjoy the scents only encountered on an evening stroll on the prairie. Great for families.

Prehistory on the Prairie

July 29, 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Midewin is working to restore the tallgrass prairie, but what was life like for those who lived here before Euro-American agriculture, when the land was mostly tallgrass? Archaeologists from the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago are continuing their work on a Midewin archaeological site that offers just such insights. Come and see archaeologists at work as they learn about the people who lived here and the environment in the last years before Marquette and Joliet.

Midewin For Kids – Family RiverWatch

Wednesday August 2, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Perfect for kids around 4th grade. Learn what citizen scientists do in the Illinois RiverWatch Program when they adopt a stream. Everyone will get to do hands on work in a stream. Everyone’s feet will get a little wet. You get to collect water insects, draw diagrams, determine the speed of a creek, do a little math, in other words be a stream scientist. Wear shorts and sneakers that can get wet.

Midewin For Kids – Mammal Madness

Wednesday August 9, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Illinois is home to more than 20 different mammals. Learn about the characteristics of mammals and how they differ from other animal groups. Study mammal tracks and other signs left behind in the wild. Mammal pelts, skulls and tracks will be available for hands-on exploration.

Midewin For Kids – Can You Dig It?

August 19, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

People have lived on this land for thousands of years. How did the people of “prairie past” use the land to live and what can we learn from them? Join “Archaeologist Joe” to make maps, learn about the tools an archaeologist uses, and get out in the field to investigate a site from the 1800’s. Do you like to dig in the dirt and solve mysteries? Maybe you’re an archaeologist too!

German Heritage Tour

October 7, 10:00 a.m.

The small rural cemeteries of Midewin attest to the many German speaking immigrants who came to this country in the 1800’s to start a new life. Learn about the difficulties these early settlers overcame in their new land, and their patriotic zeal during the American Civil War.

Fall Color Hike

October 14, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

What autumn colors have fallen on the landscape of Midewin? Come find out and immerse yourself in the shades of an autumn tallgrass prairie. Enjoy a peaceful ramble amid the waving expanse of grass. Great for one and all, including families who want to see a different face of fall.

Owls & Other Predacious Birds of the Prairie

Wednesday, October 25, 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Learn about the lifestyle and habits of these carnivorous winged creatures. How are their bodies adapted to the life of a hunter? What makes nocturnal and diurnal raptors different from one another? Join us for this unique indoor evening program and meet and greet some of these amazing animals.

Midewin For Kids – Spiders and Snakes

October 28, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

It’s just not fall without spiders and snakes! Come learn about, meet, and touch some of the crawlers and slitherers of the prairie. Discover their importance in nature and the food chain and what makes them so special!